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"MASTER FARMING"

Broadcast No. 20 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

Sept. 10, 1938 6 - 6:15 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Deep rooted in the heart of every man is the desire to go back home. This is the story of Cosmos D. Blubaugh, an Ohio farmer who turned to the city for a while--and later went back home...

SOUND: Automobile driving along highway.

BLUBAUGH

Another mile and we'll be there, Lucey.

LUCEY

Well, Cos, I hope everything works out all right. But you know how I feel. All I can remember about the farm is hard work.

BLUBAUGH

I know, Lucey, but times have changed. I think we can take this farm we've bought and make a nice place out of it. Oh, we won't have all the comforts we had in Cleveland and Akron, but---

LUCEY

---but...yes, I know, Cos. I knew all along you'd never be happy in the city. That's the only reason I was ever willing to come back.

BLUBAUGH

I'm glad we did, Lucey. Of course, I was born and raised here in Knox County, but this farm we bought may not be as good as the old place.

LUCEY

From what I've heard you say, the old place wasn't so good itself.

BLUBAUGH

No, I wouldn't say that. It was a good place, I guess, but we just had a lot of trouble. Father was one of the best farmers around here. He always worked hard to make everything get better. I think the rains did us more damage than anything else.

LUCEY

Don't forget, we'll have rains on this farm, too.

BLUBAUGH

Yes, but I think I can do something about the water this time... say, we're getting pretty close...you know, I surely remember those rains. Every time we had a heavy rain, it would wash out big chunks of soil between our corn rows and even part of the row itself. Then we had to replant the corn if there was time or the spaces would be vacant.

LUCEY

And so you left the farm and went away to the city. Yet all these years you've had a strong desire to get back to farming. I could see it plain as day.

BLUBAUGH

Yes, guess as I grew older I forgot most of our troubles on the farm. It's almost a chore to think of 'em even now....well, here we are!

SOUND: Car slows up, brakes applied, and motor stops.

BLUBAUGH

There she is, Lucey! Our new home!

LUCEY

...Oh...why, Cos, it's all grown up in briars!....and there aren't any fences...and look at that barn! Propped up by poles!

BLUBAUGH

Doesn't look so good, does it? Guess when I was closing the deal I was too excited to see anything very clearly. It hasn't been farmed much the past ten years, and there is very little grass on the whole farm for pasture. But....we can fix it up!

LUCEY

Cos, from the condition of this farm we're going to have a hard job to make a living here.

BLUBAUGH

Maybe so, Lucey, but by golly, we're going to build this farm up! You wait and see!

ORGAN: IN THE EVENING.

SOUND: Team of horses, clinking of harness approaching.

BLUBAUGH

Hello, Gus. How's it look down there?

GUS

Just fair, Dad. Better'n it has been. That lime and super-phosphate is making the pastures look a little better, but not so much.

BLUBAUGH

Something's wrong, Gus, and it doesn't take a lot of grey matter to see what it is. Too much of the soil is washing away.

GUS

I know it is. But even so, it's getting better. I never will forget the first time we went through the rotation--spindly corn, thin wheat, no clover, and weedy pastures. All of them are better now, thanks to the lime and fertilizer. If we could just do something about these gully washers!

BLUBAUGH

I know. I sit here and wonder sometimes, what's going to come from it all. I tell you, son, you can't imagine how I feel when I see those heavy rains just--well, just gouging away at the hillsides--the soil, fertilizer, lime, and seed all washing down the creek.

GUS

I can imagine, Dad. I feel the same way. Joe and Edward and I were talking about it the other day and--here's Joe now.

SOUND: Car driving up and stops. Car door opens and closes.

JOE

Say, what's the matter with you two? You look as if you'd been to a funeral.

GUS

We were just talking about the soil washing, Joe. Some pretty bad spots are showing up on the farm.

JOE

Yeah, it's tough all right. Oh, Dad, here's a letter. From the county agent, I think.

BLUBAUGH

Let's see it.

SOUND: Letter being opened.

BLUBAUGH (mumbling)

Tour....the 18th....hmmmm....

JOE

What's it say, Dad, anything new?

BLUBAUGH

Why, yes. The agent's taking a group of farmers on a tour of that new soil conservation demonstration area over by Zanesville. And he wants us to go along.

GUS

I think we better go. I've heard about that work on Salt Creek. Lots of new things like strip farming and contour tillage. Maybe we can pick up some pointers.

JOE

I can't go. I have to look after the chickens. But maybe you can.

BLUBAUGH

No use in all of us going. But I think I'll go along and see what it's all about. He says here in the letter: "You will see demonstration farms, where each field is treated according to its individual needs." Yes, I'm going to look into this soil conservation....

ORGAN: A PLOWING SONG.

ANNOUNCER

After the tour, Cosmos D. Blubaugh adopted soil conservation on a modest scale by planting a four-acre patch of raspberries on the contour, with all rows lying perfectly level across the slope... and on the following Fourth of July...

SOUND: Heavy rain.

BLUBAUGH

Coming down plenty, isn't it? Seems like it always rains on a holiday.

GUS (laughing)

Dad, you ought to know by now that there aren't any holidays for a farmer.

BLUBAUGH

No, maybe not, but you'll admit, Gus, the farm's getting better all the time. I don't know if your Mother will admit it or not.

LUCEY

Oh, Cos, of course I admit it. It makes me mighty happy just to see you happy--and you are building the farm up.

GUS

Yeah, and you ought to be glad you've got three healthy sons, too. Look what Edward has done with that fruit orchard. And you'll notice there's one rough spot that isn't washing away, because he's keeping it in sod.

LUCEY

Oh, my goodness. Look at Joe. He's soaked to the skin! Come in here out of that rain!

JOE

Dad! Dad! You and Gus get on your boots and come down here with me. I want to show you something.

GUS

Me get out in that rain? Not on your life.

BLUBAUGH

What's up, Joe?

JOE

Well, you ought to see that cornfield--you know, where the rows run up and down the hill. It's washed so badly you can't drive a horse across some of the gullies, and there's all kinds of rills running down the hill.

BLUBAUGH

I was afraid it would wash. This is a mighty heavy rain.

JOE

Yeah, but look at the raspberry patch down there. It's on the contour, and the water's standing right in between the rows. Dad, we've got to plant the whole farm on the contour next year.

ORGAN: LET IT RAIN.

ANNOUNCER

That test convinced Cosmos Blubaugh of the value of contour farming and soil conservation practices in general. A little while later, he signed an agreement with the soil conservation CCC camp at Mt. Vernon, and set up a new farm plan designed to control erosion on the entire farm. And at Farmers' Week at the Ohio State University in 1937...

SOUND: Hubbub of voices in large meeting. Chairman raps for order.

CHAIRMAN

And now, here is a Knox County farmer. This man took a farm that everyone else laughed at. He worked hard on it, year after year. The result is that his run-down farm in 1924, is today one of the outstanding farms in the county. The graceful bands of contour strip cropping alone make it the showplace of the neighborhood. And so, Mr. Cosmos D. Blubaugh, I consider it a high privilege indeed to inform you that you have been elected a--Master Farmer!

ORGAN:

ANNOUNCER

This story of a progressive Ohio farmer has come to us through the Soil Conservation Service at Dayton, Ohio, so let's turn to Ewing Jones of the Soil Conservation Service for the rest of the story.

JONES

Thank you, _____. Mr. Blubaugh's story is an interesting one, don't you think?

ANNOUNCER

It certainly is. At any rate, it ought to be an inspiration to a good many other farmers who have been struggling to make a living on hill farms.

JONES

Of course, hard work did more for that farm than anything else. The foresight of Mr. Blubaugh and his determination to get ahead were responsible for much of the change. But I think he'll agree that strip cropping has been a major item in his building-up program.

ANNOUNCER

But not every farm is adapted to strip cropping, is it?

JONES

Not every farm, _____, but thousands of Ohio farms are ideally suited for this type of farming. That's the reason I thought a good many farmers would be interested in this bulletin on strip cropping. It's called "Strip Cropping for Soil Conservation."

ANNOUNCER

And copies of the strip farming bulletin may be secured by writing Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio?

JONES

That's right. It isn't much trouble to grab a penny postcard and a pencil and just write, "Please send me the bulletin on strip cropping," address it to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and mail it. That little card might lead to another story of successful farming.

ANNOUNCER

Who knows? At any rate, strip cropping can be a part of successful farming.

JONES

Well, _____, we've heard the story of Cosmos D. Blubaugh, and now I think we ought to hear from Mr. Blubaugh himself. Personally, I'd like to ask him a few questions, but I'll turn that pleasure over to Bob Barre. Mr. R. C. Barre, of the Soil Conservation Service project at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, helped Mr. Blubaugh plan his farm for soil conservation, so Bob, suppose you step in here and see if we can get our honor guest to tell his side of the story.

BARRE

All right, Ewing. I don't imagine that'll be hard, because Mr. Blubaugh is so enthusiastic about erosion control that he's always ready to talk about it. I think it's up to him, as the hero of this story, to provide us with a happy ending.

BLUBAUGH

The ending is happy enough, Mr. Barre. I'm convinced we're now doing a better job of farming than we've ever done before. But I do object to the use of that word "hero."

BARRE

Perhaps I should have said "central character." I know we don't have any heroes or villains in our stories these days.

BLUBAUGH

At any rate, there was nothing heroic about what I did--or rather--what we did. It was just plain common sense.

BARRE

I notice that you used the term "we," Mr. Blubaugh, apparently including your three sons. Are they still in partnership with you?

BLUBAUGH

Yes, they are, very much so. We have just put in a three-deck poultry house with capacity for 1,500 laying hens. It has electric lights, automatic water control, and all that. Joe has charge of that work. Edward has charge of the fruit trees, about 39 acres in apples and peaches. These trees have been set at the rear of the farm on rougher land, and, as you know, the soil is kept in sod as an erosion control measure. Gus, my oldest son, has charge of the 15 Jerseys and the farm work.

BARRE

Now, to get down to this matter of soil conservation. I know that you're working to control erosion on every last acre, and I wish you'd tell us a little about the kind of work you're doing.

BLUBAUGH

Contouring, for one thing. All our plowing, planting, and cultivation is across the slope these days. I don't know what the boys would say if I ever suggested going back to straight-row farming in square-cornered fields.

BARRE

I know a great many other farmers who will agree with them and with you. Square farming just doesn't seem to fit an essentially round country like Ohio. If you want to hold the soil on those rolling farms you simply have to operate across the slope.

BLUBAUGH

You make it sound like a chore, Mr. Barre. I think contour farming is easy.

BARRE

Of course, it is. You're working on the level all the time. No long uphill pulls; no need to worry about brakes on the equipment. Of course, on your farm you use horses almost exclusively, but in tractor-farming sections of the country, contour tillage is bringing about real savings in gas and oil. But sticking to your farm, I wish you'd tell about the transformation of that nine-acre corn-field that was so badly gullied by the Fourth of July rain.

BLUBAUGH

Well, that field is now part of a strip cropping system. Instead of planting it wholly to corn or wheat or clover, we lay it out in strips across the slope. The trick is to alternate the strips--planting one to corn and the next one below to clover or wheat. There's the happy ending to your story, Mr. Barre--soil conservation and better crop production.

BARRE

That certainly is a happy ending, Mr. Blubaugh, and you did it without the help of that strip cropping bulletin, didn't you?

BLUBAUGH

Yes, but I had the help of three fine boys and a fine wife. Then I had the help of a vocational agriculture teacher and the county agent, and the help of the Soil Conservation Service. But as far as that bulletin is concerned, some of my neighbors have asked for copies, and it will do them a lot of good, I know.

JONES

I was hoping you'd say that, Mr. Blubaugh, for this is a bulletin chock-full of information. Anyhow, thanks to you and Bob Barre for coming down here from Mt. Vernon. I know that many farmers have enjoyed hearing your story--the story of a man who went back home, and made good. And speaking of strip cropping, it certainly is gaining in popularity. You hear about it everywhere, at farm meetings, on the street, even on the golf course...

SOUND: Whish of golf club and crack as club drives ball.

FIRST GOLFER

Nice drive, Bill! Two hundred yards at least--but, oh! oh!

SECOND GOLFER

Oh, oh, is right. Look at it curve around.

FIRST GOLFER

I'll say it's curving...just, well, just like contour strip cropping. That reminds me, I'm going to get a copy of that strip farming bulletin.

ANNOUNCER

Copies of the bulletin, "Strip Cropping for Soil Conservation," may be secured by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

